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American School
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AN OLD CORINTHIAN VASE FROM CORINTH

[PLATES VI, VII]

IN one of the deepest of the trial trenches dug by the American School in the search for traces of Old Corinth in the spring of 1896 (Trench X on the Plan, — this *Journal*, Vol. I, 1897, Plate XIV), just north of the road leading westward from the Plane Tree square of the modern village, and within twenty feet of the square itself, was found the mouth of a well partly covered with massive blocks, at a depth of 6.50 m. below the level of the road. The cellar-holes of the houses destroyed by the earthquake of 1858 made here a depression of two or three metres, so that the above-mentioned depth was attained without more difficulty than the depth of 5 m. in several of our other trenches. That the well was old was evinced by the walls, evidently of Hellenic times, which lay above it.

The contents of the well were of unusual interest. Directly at the mouth of it we began to find fragments of Old Corinthian vases and no others. In going down into it 1 m. we collected several baskets full of these. But our progress was exceedingly difficult, since only one man could work in the limited space. Furthermore, water collected so rapidly here that we at last yielded to the difficulty and deferred the thorough emptying of the well to a time when, by cleaning away a larger space about it, we might make a more methodical approach. It is to be regretted that we did not reach the bottom of the well, even if it took all summer, for when the fragments already found were brought to the Athenian museum and washed, sorted, and pieced together as far as possible, the extent and

importance of our deficit was fully impressed upon us. A fair start was made in the building up of eight vases, the completion of which must be left to a later campaign. One vase, however, here reproduced from drawings by Gillieron (Fig. 1 and PLATES VI, VII), was nearly complete. This, put together out of forty-six pieces, lacks the foot altogether; two



FIGURE 1. — CELEBE FROM CORINTH.

large gaps appear on the body, one 0.31×0.04 m. and another 0.09×0.09 m., as well as several smaller gaps, one of which leaves a panther almost headless.

The vase is a *Celebe*¹ of the large kind found so frequently in Etruscan tombs; for example, the well-known vases containing

¹ Some German writers, e. g. Wilisch, *Altcorinthische Thonindustrie*, Tafel IV, 46, *et al.*, classify vases of this form as *Amphoræ a Colonnæte*. But this

the Departure of Hector (*Monumenti*, 1855, Tav. XX), and the Departure of Amphiaraus (*Monumenti*, X, 4, 5). Without the foot it is 0.32 m. high; and with the foot it might reach a height of 0.40 m.¹ The diameter at the broadest part is 0.40 m., which, even with the liberal allowance for a foot, makes the usual proportions of diameter equal to or greater than the height.² The diameter of the mouth is 0.275 m., but the rim being 0.03 m. wide, the diameter measured from the outside edges of the rim is 0.335 m. This rim is broadened out in two places into handle-plates. From the outside edge of one handle-plate to the outside edge of the other the distance is 0.43 m. The breadth of the handle-plates including the rim is 0.08 m. Their length is in one case 0.115 m., in the other 0.117 m., their thickness 0.015 m. The length of the curved handle is 0.28 m., its diameter 0.02 m.

The clay, which is of a greenish-gray color, is not very carefully prepared. Several coarse grains of sand disturb the painted surface, and in the fresh breaks these are everywhere apparent. In both color and coarseness, then, the vase resembles the famous Corinthian *pinakes*.³ The walls are not by any means of uniform thickness; *e. g.* on the side containing the picture of the cocks a break near the bottom shows a thickness of 0.02 m., while at a point nearly opposite, the thickness is only 0.004 m. At a point under the cocks, and just above the rays, the thickness is 0.01 m., while at a point of equal height on the opposite side it is only 0.005 m. This whole lower part, then, shows one side from two to five times as thick as the other.

The inside is covered with a very dark brown paint, which term ought to be applied only to vases on which each handle consists of two upright *Colonne* joining the rim to the belly of the vase. In our vase the handle does not lose itself in the rim, but the rim rests upon and is joined to its upper curved portion. The difference though slight is important for accurate classification.

¹ The older the vase, the greater the likelihood of a rather high foot. In the restoration I have supplied a foot of the height of that of the Amphiaraus vase.

² See the list given in Wilisch, *op. cit.* p. 27, n. 107.

³ Furtwängler, *Vasensammlung* (Berlin), p. 48; Wilisch, *op. cit.* p. 33.

might almost be called black. Near the top it is carefully laid on, but lower down is much cracked, probably in consequence of being more carelessly done. On the outside we have the usual rays of dark brown running up from the foot on a field of the natural color of the clay. These rays, fourteen in number, 0.105 m. long, and 0.01 m. broad at the base, rise from a band of the same color which appears under the only two rays which are preserved in their whole length. Resting on the points of the rays comes a broad band of dark brown, covering the larger part of the surface. This on the side containing the cocks is much cracked, perhaps from exposure to fire. At the top it is bordered by a system of two bands of red or purple, each 0.005 m. wide, separated from the field by a brown stripe 0.003 m. wide, and from each other by a similar one 0.002 m. wide. This series of bands is certainly continuous, although it is difficult to trace under the cocks. Almost certainly another purple band, 0.01 m. in width, formed a similar border on the lower edge above the rays. Between these two borders the whole broad band is streaked. One might doubt whether there was originally a variety of colors here, were it not for the fact that on some of the fragments from similar vases found in the same place were narrow bands shading from red through brown to black.

On each side between the handles is reserved a field for the principal decoration. The space on the sides is 0.10 m. high, and the length is 0.38 m. on one side, on the other 0.365 m. The larger field, viz. the one with the boar, is lighter colored than the other, which has the greenish tint of the field of the rays at the bottom. Since this latter field also shows some variety, being darker under the field with cocks, it is not unreasonable to suppose that all the parts of the vase not covered with dark paint were left the natural color of the clay covered with a thin slip; and that the varied color of the different fields is due to the different action of the fire in the firing process. The upper surface of the rim is of the same light color as the concave side below, where the brush could not reach.

The whole upper part of the vase, which was thinner than the lower part, was more thoroughly affected by the firing.

On the longer of the two fields stand a boar and a panther, in that attitude of mutual nonchalance so characteristic of the Old Corinthian style. Equally characteristic is the panther with his face turned to the front. The boar, a massive animal, much larger than the panther, is a fine piece of painting. The incised lines are carefully drawn, although placed without any particular reason, especially on the fore legs. The applied red is also laid on without any obvious principle of distribution, but with great care to make a brilliant animal. In regard to the bristly spine we are left in some doubt; looking at the fore part of the animal we should suppose that everything above the long horizontal incised line was intended for this row of bristles, although marks of division are not given, as they are in the Calydonian Boar of the Dodwell vase, and on the Tarragon tripod (*Anch. Zeit.* 1881, Tafel iii), which is the usual practice. It is quite clear that in the small gap which contained the upper part of the head this row of bristles must have suddenly diminished, as in the vases cited. As we approach the haunches some curved transverse lines run quite to the top of the outline of the animal. From that point backwards all appears to be solid body. In this respect the boar differs, then, from the others just mentioned, where the line of bristles runs clear back to the tail.

The panther is not in any way different from ordinary Old Corinthian panthers. One might incline to the view that this field was the front or show side of the vase. The drawing is more careful than in the other field, and in accordance with this the rosettes are more sparingly applied, being only four, against ten in the other field. The field itself is somewhat larger.

In the other field are two cocks, and between them, not from any necessity of emphasizing the fact that they are not fighting, a goose, or a swan, smaller than the cocks. The spirit of the Old Corinthian style could not be better represented than in

two parade cocks in contrast to such fighting cocks as those on the reliefs from Xanthus (Brunn, *Denkmäler*, Tafel ciii) and on Athenian vases. Very similar to ours are the cocks on the Corinthian vase published in the *Sammlung Sabouroff*, Tafel xlviii.

But if there is no life, there is considerable variegation. The bodies of all three animals are covered, where the red color is absent, with incised lines, which on the necks of the cocks form a network. There is considerable divergence in the placing of these lines on the different cocks. The red color in this field is placed, according to nature, on the comb and wattles of the cocks, but otherwise on no rational principle, except that of enlivening the surface. A curious example of this are the seven little discs, or eyes, on the tail of the cock to the left, and two on that of the one to the right, as well as five on the neck of the goose. These spots resemble those on the tail feathers of the Hippalectryon in *Annali del Istituto*, 1874, Tav. F, given also in Harrison and Maccoll, *Vase Paintings*, plate viii. The cock to the left has two well-developed, sharp spurs, while the one to the right has only a stub of one spur.

The principal sign of greater carelessness in this field is the reckless manner of drawing the incised lines, which sometimes run off the bodies of the animals into the space around them as well as into the red coloring. The excess of rosettes has already been alluded to. Of the ten rosettes, the one over the left-hand cock is quite different from the others, having two consecutive, incised circles as a core, from which radiate nine lines, making a flower of nine petals; but the rim of the flower is scalloped into eleven petals, so that no great superiority in careful drawing can be claimed for this particular rosette. Of the others five are divided in the roughest way into six compartments, although the edge of the one over the right-hand cock shows eleven scallops, and the middle one, behind the tail of the left-hand cock, thirteen scallops. Three others are simply crossed by two lines in such a hasty way that it looks

as though the workman had struck at them hit or miss, and one has not been favored at all. It must be admitted that on the other field, also, one or two of the rosettes can hardly escape being called, like these, formless dabs of paint. It will not do to lay too much stress on the signs of carelessness in the cock field. It may have been in spite of this, when the color was fresh, about as showy as the other field. The cocks are, on the whole, distinguished by greater naturalness than the quadrupeds. Curtius ascribes the usual success in cocks to the fact that this animal did not come to Greece through the medium of Assyrian schematism (*Arch. Zeit.* 1878, p. 160).

The rim of the vase is ornamented with forty-eight rays, the bases resting on the inner circumference, and the points terminating in a very narrow band of dark paint, now mostly worn away. The handle-plates divide these rays unequally, twenty-three being on the side over the cocks and twenty-five on the other.

Each handle-plate, once bordered by a narrow strip of black, has a double palmette entangled in a trailing plant. It is far simpler and probably more archaic than the pattern in the *Sammlung Sabouroff* (*ibid.*), and, as there are no lotus blossoms, we can hardly call it a combination of palmette and lotus. The two ends of the palmette are not symmetrical, *e. g.* the one here reproduced in PLATE VII has nine leaves on its outer end and only eight on the inner end. The radiating lines are here also not in accord with the scalloping at the edge, and, as they are curved rather than straight, they cut right through the red color which is laid on the alternate leaves of the palmette. The other handle-plate lacks the rosettes altogether, and has, instead of the double band or cushion in the middle, only a single one.

But it is not on the score of its decoration that our vase demands attention. It contains no human figures which might be combined into a mythological scheme. It has no inscription, and so lacks the two principal features which have made the Old Corinthian vases, from the Dodwell vase down to the latest

discovery, such interesting objects of study. Even its ornamentation is so sparingly applied as to maké it in this respect almost if not quite unique among its class, giving it perhaps an interest from this very lack. While we would not disparage the vase by denying that when its *parure* was all fresh upon it, it would have made, in spite of the superficial character of some of the work, a favorable impression, we must claim attention for it mainly on the score of its size and form.

As this may seem a strange claim to attention, I hasten to set the claim in its proper light by a quotation or two from authorities on ancient vases. Rayet et Collignon (*Histoire de la Céramique Grecque*, p. 72) have the following statement: "La plupart des vases de Caere et de Tarquinies se distinguent de ceux de Corinthe par leur dimensions plus considerable. . . . La forme la plus fréquente parmi les vases de style corinthien trouvés en Étrurie est celle de la kélébé." This is perhaps enough for my purpose; but lest it should fail, it may be reënforced by the following statement from the latest and fullest discussion of old Corinthian pottery (Wilisch, *Altcorinthische Thonindustrie*, p. 114): "Als auffällig muss Brunn zugegeben werden dass die in Italien so häufigen Colonnnettampforen sich in Korinth selbst gar nicht gefunden haben. Den Zufall hier für verantwortlich zu machen geht nicht wohl an; denn wenn auch die Gräber sicherlich uns wohl noch manche Ueberraschung bringen werden, so sind doch aus dem korinthischen Boden bereits so viele Vasen zu Tage gefördert worden, dass es überaus merkwürdig wäre, wenn von einer im alten Korinth selbst verbreiteten Gefässgattung noch kein Exemplar an das Licht getreten wäre. Es ist demnach kaum zu erwarten dass Vasen wie die caeretaner Amphoren mit Hektors Abschied und Amphiarao's Ausfahrt sich noch in Korinth finden werden."

Since our trial trenches which had for their object the discovery of a proper place to dig in the future, and were quite as likely to miss as to hit, have revealed not merely one large

Celebe, but remains of two others,¹ we may call for a revision of the statements as to the forms and sizes of vases found at Corinth. But this is not all. From the fact that we have a vase of undoubted provenience, we may give a substantial contribution to the discussion of the question of the origin of the vases found in the Etruscan tombs, a question which is not dead, even if it sleeps.

It is not so very many years ago that one heard the phrase "Etruscan Vases," as if Etruria and not Greece was the home of the ceramic art. And now, although it has long been recognized that many of the vases found in Etruria were made in Corinth and other parts of Greece, the prevailing view is that the greater part of them was made in Etruria.² This judgment may stand as the final result of scientific study, and yet Dümmeler (*Röm. Mitt.* III, p. 180) characterizes the process of discriminating between the imported vases and those of local origin as one of the most difficult tasks connected with the history of vase-painting. A striking exemplification of this difficulty is seen in the case of Helbig, who, in the *Annali*, 1863, p. 210 ff., selected five vases from Caere as pseudo-Corinthian, and gave the characteristics which separated these from genuine Corinthian work; but in his book, *Das Homerische Epos* (2^{te} Auflage, p. 288), changed his view, because it seemed certain that one of these vases came from a tomb not later than the end of the sixth century, although Brunn (*Ausgrabungen der Certosa*) denied the early date of the grave, and defended the early view of Helbig against his later recantation.

¹ The handle-plate of one of these, which must have been of about the same size as the one here published, is reproduced on PLATE VII. In the place of the double palmette this handle-plate has a swan. The subject as well as the execution leaves little doubt that the vase of which this was a part was much superior to the one which we publish.

² Brunn, *Probleme in der Geschichte der Vasenmalerei*, § 14, says: "Lässt sich auch der positive Beweis noch nicht erbringen, so führen doch manche Anzeichen darauf hin, dass die gesammte Masse dieser pseudokorinthischen und athenischen Vasen nicht aus griechischen, sondern aus italischen Fabriken, wahrscheinlich aus Caere selbst, stammt, auf welchen Ort sie bisher fast ausnahmslos beschränkt erscheint."

In this difficult matter our vase must be reckoned with, not as giving evidence which settles the case, on the contrary perhaps as contributing to the difficulty; but it, at all events, removes from the discussion arguments based on the absence in Corinth itself of the large *Celebe*.

In still another way our vase gives assistance in discriminating between genuine and spurious Corinthian vases. Wilisch (*op. cit.* p. 116) states that Furtwängler sets down twenty-eight vases of Campanian provenience in the Berlin Antiquarium as Italo-Corinthian over against thirty-five genuine Corinthian vases from Nola, using among other criteria that of the "matte grüngraue Farbe des Thones"¹ in the former.

It would be extremely desirable to arrive at some date for our vase, in order to array it in the chronological series provisionally established for the noted Corinthian vases hitherto found (Wilisch, *op. cit.* p. 151 and 141, note 506). But as we have no inscription to guide us, we can only make some approximation to a date by following certain general considerations.

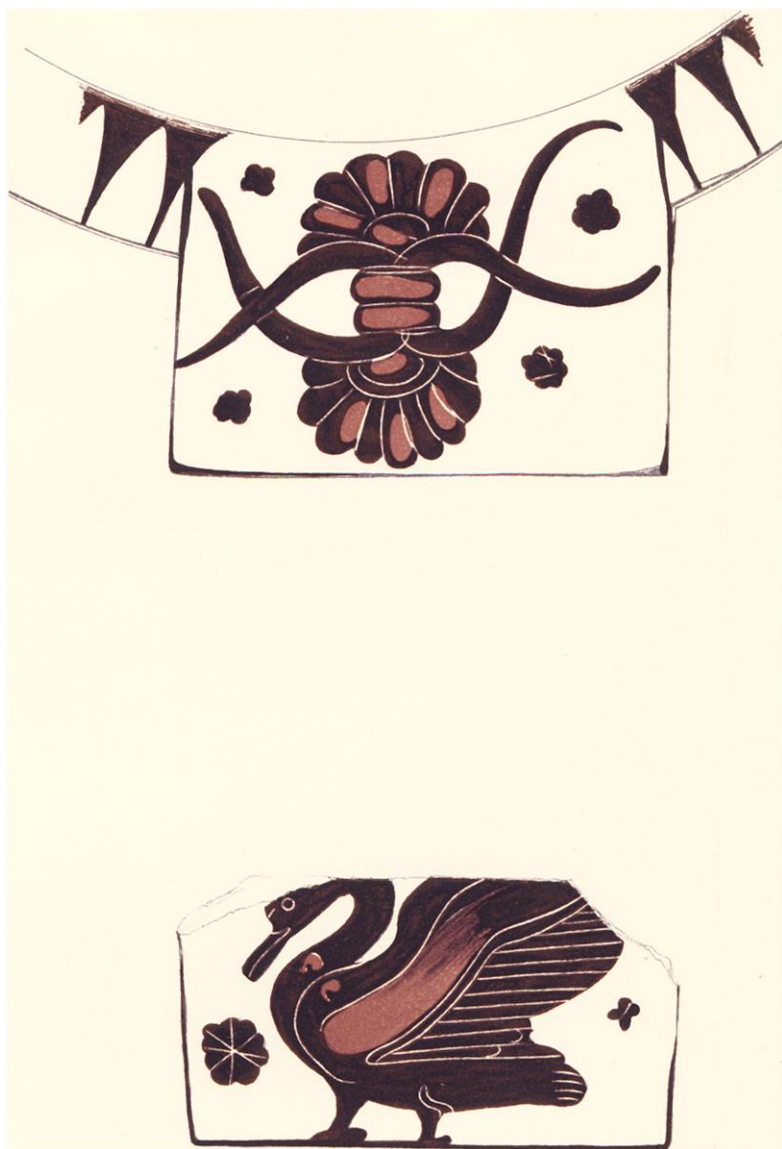
It is clear, in the first place, that the vase falls within the period when the Old Corinthian style was unshaken by the influences which put an end to it; and since the first great change was the introduction of black figures on reddish clay,

¹ This must refer to the separate classification of several vases in Furtwängler's Catalogue, section X, no. 1156 ff., although Furtwängler does not there give any criteria for the division. He mentions, to be sure, under several numbers of these "Italische von den Korinthischen abhängige oder ihnen verwandte Gefässe," the item of "grüngrauer Thon," "grünlich grau," "gelbgrau," and "grau." As our vase is of greenish-gray clay, it would invalidate the classification as far as it is based on that criterion. But this remark is directed rather at the statement of Wilisch than at the classification of Furtwängler, which is probably perfectly correct. But the oracle is dumb as to his criterion.

P. Arndt in *Studien zu Vasenkunde*, p. 151, declares: "der Thon der echt-korinthischen Gefässe ist heller, gelblicher, kräftiger geführt als der der italischen, welcher dunkler und weniger frisch erscheint. Dafür ist bei den letzteren mehr Nachdruck auf die Glasur gelegt." With admirable caution he adds: "Natürlich ist diese Beobachtung kein durchschlagendes Kriterium; in Griechenland wie in Italien wird man verschieden gefärbte Thonarten verwendet haben." Our vase amply justifies his caution.



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in the first half of the sixth century (Wilisch, *op. cit.* p. 152), even if our vase is one born out of due time, it is still likely to be somewhat early in the sixth century, and in all probability goes back as far as 600 B.C. On the other hand, as a caution against putting it too early, we have an almost total absence of orientalism, which came in like a flood at the early stages of the Corinthian style. The animals, while purely Corinthian, have nothing fantastic or monstrous about them. In the amount, as well as the manner, of the ornamentation, there is great restraint, and this would seem to point to a later date, for instance, than the Dodwell vase. The absence of human figures must probably be ascribed to the taste of the painter, for this vase can hardly be put earlier than all the vases of the Corinthian style that contain such figures. If all other indications really pointed to an earlier date than 600 B.C., the presence of the two cocks would offer no serious objection to this chronology.¹

It would appear likely that our vase has seen usage. The inner edge of the rim is worn away all around, and the outer edge also has been so worn that the narrow black band spoken of above has nearly disappeared. Perhaps it was no mere show vase intended for a temple, but for utility. This might account, in part at least, for the sparseness of the decoration as compared with contemporary vases.

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¹ Cf. L. Gurlitt, *Bemalte Marmorplatten in Athen (Hist. und Phil. Aufsätze Ernst Curtius gewidmet)*, p. 157: "In der That finden wir Hahn und Henne schon auf sehr alten korinthischen Gefässen, der Natur bis ins Kleinste getreu nachgebildet." Against the date of 550 B.C. proposed by Hehn, *Culturpflanzen und Hausthiere*, 6^{te} Auflage, p. 323, as that of the appearance of the cock in Greece on his journey from India through Persia, is its appearance on the Chrysapha relief, which must be more than a century older.